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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 000633

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND ACTING A/S CARTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - PUNTLAND PRESIDENT SEEKS GREATER  
ENGAGEMENT

REF: A. ADDIS 648

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 594

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson for reasons 1.4(b)  
and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a March 21 Djibouti meeting with Ambassador Swan and visiting Somalia Unit Poloff, Puntland President Abdirahman Mohamed "Farole" expressed support for the Somalia federal system but criticized many aspects of the Djibouti peace process, especially a perceived lack of consultation during the January presidential elections, and an insufficiently representative expanded Parliament. Farole urged cautious U.S. engagement with Sharif. He provocatively alleged that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President was bringing violent extremists into the process and bowing to al-Shabaab in his acceptance of Sharia law. We encouraged President Farole to engage in the Djibouti process rather than complain about it from the sidelines. We warned him not to undermine the fragile TFG. Farole conceded that he and Sharif have mutual interests that would be best served by cooperating on security and jointly creating a foundation for an equitable federal state structure.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary, cont'd: In a March 23 meeting, Farole sought greater cooperation with the U.S. in the fight against piracy. Other European and Southeast Asian nations were more interested in protecting their illegal fishing interests, he said. Farole complained that Puntland had not been invited to any international piracy conferences. He asked for equipment and logistical support for the anti-piracy efforts of Puntland's security forces. Farole confirmed that the persons under control who were transferred to Puntland on March 2 were still being detained. End summary.

Meeting President Farole in Djibouti  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) On March 21, Puntland President Abdirahman Mohamed "Farole" met with Ambassador Swan and Somalia Unit PolOff in Djibouti. Farole had been in Djibouti for approximately one week for meetings with Djibouti President Guelleh, SRSG Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and prominent Somali business leaders attending a UN-organized private sector meeting. President Farole was joined by Puntland Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Farah Dala.

[1](#)4. (C) Ambassador Swan congratulated President Farole on his election, noting that both the Puntland election and the election of President Sharif represent key openings that, along with the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces, presented an

important opportunity for Somalia. Farole emphasized that now he comes with a mandate from Puntland, after being "elected by the people." (Note: Puntland's Parliament elects the president; Farole won 49 of 66 parliamentary votes.) He said that his top priorities were addressing security challenges, including piracy, and improving government financial management. Farole noted Puntland's successes in addressing security and said he would like to see an AMISOM base in Galkayo, because "al-Shabaab fighting is on Puntland's doorstep."

Tepid Support for  
The Djibouti Process  
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15. (C) Farole offered only a lackluster endorsement of the Djibouti process, though he insisted that he supports peace and reconciliation efforts. He alleged that Puntland had no positions in the last TFG or the new Government of National Unity. (Comment: Farole ignored the fact that former President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Sharmarke both are from Puntland clans.) Farole said past failed peace processes can be tied to outsiders who "never choose the right people," adding that "the United States first supported warlords, and now is supporting 'extremists'." Maintaining that he wanted to improve the process, he said that he would meet face-to-face with SRSG Ould-Abdallah and tell him "what he has done wrong and what he has done right." Farole faulted the international community for allowing Sharif to "unilaterally appoint 275 MPs." Ambassador Swan countered by noting that all of the new MPs were endorsed by their

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respective clans and that Farole was invited by all sides (several times) to join the negotiations in Djibouti. We emphasized that the Djibouti process continues and that it would benefit from his constructive contributions. We made clear U.S. support for the peace process and for SRSG Ould-Abdallah's leadership.

Urging Caution With Sharif  
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16. (C) Continuing to lecture us, Farole warned against supporting Sheikh Sharif, contending that he is only focused on reconciliation among his clan, and not the larger population. Launching into a history of Mogadishu and the Benadir region, Farole stated, "Mogadishu should not belong to the Abgal who captured it." Farole held that Sharif's acceptance of Sharia law will eliminate the chance of a constitution. He called the announcement, "a rejection of secularism" that the majority of Somalis will oppose. Farole cautioned that the arms embargo should not be lifted, lest Sharif try to arm his people and threaten Puntland. Minister Dala stated that one of Puntland's major concerns is that Sharif has "brought al-Shabaab to overrun Puntland and Ethiopia."

17. (C) Farole said he wants Sharif to take the first step in opening direct communication with Puntland. We told Farole that we urged Sharif and his government to do just that. Minister Dala intervened, saying that the Puntland position differs from that of southern Somalia. He argued that Puntland was far more advanced, negotiating bilateral deals with partners, building airports and roads, and strengthening institutions. Farole added that, unlike in the south, "our sheiks are with us" and that he had even sent Puntland-based religious leaders to help calm Mogadishu.

18. (C) One of Farole's advisors agreed: "Sharif has yet to prove his influence and before he sets his eye on the nation, he should prove himself in his home territory," and Farole chimed in, noting that "we do not expect to be undermined by a government that does not exist. "These people do not even have offices, how can you expect them to lead?"

¶9. (C) During the conversation, Farole insisted several times that he was a strong proponent of a federal structure for Somalia, noting that "Puntland is one of the federal states, including other states such as Jubaland. He said that an administration for south-central Somalia should be established. "We are for reconciliation, we are for security, we are for a federal constitution," Farole continued. By contrast, he said, Sharif supports a centralized government because he and "his people" do not have their own strong state.

¶10. (C) Winding down, Farole insisted that he and President Sharif have common issues and concerns. The Minister of Planning added, "If Sharif gets overrun by radical Islamists, we must help him ) the only solution is for the Darod and Hawiye clans to come together." Farole suggested that the meeting end on this more positive note. The Puntland President requested a follow-up meeting in Djibouti and requested that the USG open a USAID office in Garowe to strengthen development efforts.

Piracy  
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¶11. (C) In a March 23 follow-up meeting with PolOff, Farole offered more detail about the nature of the partnership he seeks on piracy. He argued that "Only Puntland can solve piracy and we can do it with our own forces." Farole said that there are many countries who have indicated their goal to work with Puntland on piracy but told us the United States is the only "honest" partner in the fight. Many nations from Europe and particularly South East Asia were more interested in protecting their illegal fishing interests off Puntland's shores. Farole complained that Puntland had not been invited to any international fora to discuss piracy. The international community would be better served by

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strengthening Puntland's capacity to fight piracy rather than having "expensive" warships patrol the seas.

¶12. (C) Farole asked for equipment to develop the Puntland Coast Guard, especially telecommunications and transportation. He emphasized the need for logistical support to combat piracy on land. Piracy directly threatened Puntland's security because it attracted "Somali-speaking criminals" from all over the region. Farole confirmed that pirates and suspected pirates who have been sent to Puntland by the United States and other countries were still detained.

Because of a space shortage in Puntland's prisons, the Administration had been forced to "amnesty" some of Puntland's petty criminals, and that his Administration would welcome assistance to build a new prison.

Comment  
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¶13. (C) While the initial meeting with Farole was sometimes tense, the President during the second meeting said that he appreciated the candor and welcomed more direct contact. Farole acknowledged at the end of the second meeting that Puntland was still part of a "federal" Somalia. Some of Farole's more ham-handed comments about the TFG leadership seemed at best designed to exploit perceived fears among some members of the international community about Sharif. At worst, they were consciously designed to undermine the TFG. We were unequivocally clear that support for Puntland hinges on its support to the Djibouti process and a federal system. We will continue to urge Farole's support for the TFG and ongoing reconciliation efforts, and will seek avenues for cultivating a more productive partnership, including in the fight against piracy.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Swan cleared this cable.  
SLUTZ